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PART I : Land, History and People

1. General Orientation:

A. Definition of Terms:

The Amhara culture dealt with in this study is to a considerable extent identified with the culture formerly [17] referred to as "Abyssinian". Actually, the Abyssinian culture, heir to the cultural blending of ancient Semitic and African traits, has developed into several sub-cultures of which the Amhara culture is the major one. Another important sub-culture would be that of the Tigre-speaking population of Eritrea.

The term "Abyssinia", which was the official name of the country until the 20th century, is possibly derived from the name the centrally-located river Awash, which flows in the Rift Valley bisecting the country, losing itself in the eastern lowland desert on its way to the Red Sea coast. Another explanation derives it from the Habashat, one of the Semitic tribes from Hadhramaut, which crossed over the Bab El Mandeb about 500 B.C. A third explanation derives the name from the Arabic term signifying racial mixture.

The present Emperor preferred the official name Ethiopia, the political frontiers of which include the territory of non-Abyssinian peoples like the Galla, conquered by Abyssinia in the late 19th century. "Ethiopia", derived from the Greek term signifying "people with sunburned faces", was used in classical antiquity to describe all Africa south of the Sahara.

111 The religion of the Amhara and most other "Abyssinian" peoples is an early, Monophysite form of Christianity, often

779 referred to as "Coptic", although the Abyssinian Copts prefer the term "Towado" meaning Orthodox. The term Copt is derived from the Greek term for "Egyptian." Since the Coptic Metropolitan of Alexandria, Egypt, was also head of the Abyssinian Church and appointed all Abyssinian archbishops until recent years of the reign of the present Emperor, there is some justification for the use of the term Coptic. It will be so used in this study, to indicate the "Abyssinian Church of Ethiopia".

In books on Ethiopia, one often finds the term "Amhara" 101 used in a broad sense as synonymous with Abyssinian Coptic Christian. Although the Amhara in their ethnocentrism also use it in this sense, it is not good usage in the author's opinion. The Tigrinya-speaking peoples of the province of [711] Tigre are also good "Copts", in religious belief and observance; however, they differ from the Amhara in many phases of culture, and, according to native opinion, in personality". Therefore, the term Amhara is used in this study only for the Amharic-speaking, Coptic population of the provinces of Begemdir(Gondar), Gojjam, and parts of Shoa. Formerly, all three provinces were included in a territorial unit called Amhara; hence the name.

B. Linguistic Definitions

There are three major linguistic families in Ethiopia: 197 Cushitic, Semitic and Nilotic. Cushitic is predominant, roughly speaking, in the southern half of modern Ethiopia, including Galla, Somali, Sidamo, Agau, etc. Nilotic languages predominate along the northern and western escarp-

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Table 1. Population Estimates of the 12 Ethiopian Provinces

Administrative Province	Area in Square Kilometers	Official estimate of population 1954	Ethnic Preponderance (author's comments) Language	Religion	Additional Remarks
Begemder	78,200	1,800,000	Amharic	Coptic	some border Muslim and highland Falashas.
Gojjam	62,900	1,600,000	Amharic	Coptic	some Agau (old Cushitic)speakers
Shoa	78,700	2,100,000	Amharic	Coptic	some Gurage-speakers
Tigre	67,000	1,000,000	Galla, Tigrina.	Coptic	
Wollo	78,700	1,000,000	mostly Galla	Coptic	some Amharic
Wollega	67,200	1,000,000	Galla,Amharic	Coptic	some border Shanqalla(negroid, Nilotic-speaking)
Arussi	36,000	1,000,000	Galla	Muslim-"pagan"	
Hararge	404,000	1,600,000	Galla, some Somali	Muslim-"pagan"	some Somali semi-nomad tribes
Ilubabor	50,000	1,300,000	Galla, Nilotic old-Cushitic	"pagan"	many border Shanqalla & other negroids
Kaffa	49,000	1,200,000	Galla,Nilotic old-Cushitic	"pagan"-Muslim	many border negroid
Gamu-Gofa	39,000	900,000	Sudanese,Galla	"pagan"	border negroids
Sidamo	102,000	1,250,000	old-Cushitic (Sidamo,Wollamo)	"pagan"	some nomadic border tribes
	1,110,000	15,750,000			
(Eritrea, federated 1952)	119,000	1,100,000	Bedja(Cushitic) Tigre(Semitic) Nilotic	Muslim Coptic	

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212 to facilitate the teaching of Amharic to non-Amharic Ethiopians, illiterates, and for typing.

642 This latter change has not been made largely be-
779 cause of theopposition of the Abyssinian church. The Emperor is officially "Defender of the Faith". His connection with the church follows Old Testament patterns during the reigns of David and Solomon. The "tabot " (ark), which Emperor Menelik I supposedly spirited away from the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem to its secret place at Aksum, is regarded as guarding the liberty of the countryto this day. Church and State are thus intimately connected, and when Mussolini threatened Ethiopia, the Emperor and his chieftains swore to defend the "tabot" with their lives. After liberation, the Coptic Abyssinian church was reaffirmed as the State church, though weakened in its temporal powers(esp. feudal land tenure). When the last link with Alexandria was severed a few years ago, the Abyssinian church became fully the established state church.

173 The traditional epic of the "Solomonic Dynasty", the book "Käbrä Nägäst", is still honored officially, and taken literally by the people. It contains an extension of the Biblical story of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to the court of King Solomon, and claims she conceived a son, Menelik I, the first Abyssinian ruler of the Solomonic Dynasty. The book may possibly date from the 13th century, justifying the resumption of this dynasty.

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697 from the 16th-17th centuries. When this area, which had been a sort of frontier area, became too settled, the political prison was transferred farther northwest to the edge of the escarpment leading down to the Sudan, between Chelga and Metemma.

671 175 779 A formal, written law code was superimposed on the earlier unwritten one in the 13th century, when the Abyssinian church extended its ecclesiastical code to cover also the temporal judicial behavior of lords as well as commoners, in all phases of life. This is referred to as "yäbaherya heg" (lit. the Law from Overseas), regarded as including "Moral Law" (i.e.Church Law).

This code, called the "Fetha Nägäst"(Law of the Kings) was basically derived from Roman Canon Law of Constantine, formulated at the Coptic Synod in Egypt in the 9th and 10th centuries, then translated in 1239, by Al-Safi Abu Al-Fada'il, into the Arabic language which the Copts of Egypt had by that time adopted for their own worship also. The code was a blend of Canons of the Coptic church councils, the Justinian Code, and theBible.

It was brought to Abyssinia during the reign of King Zera-Yaqob, and translated in[illegible] Geez, then in its final stages as a spoken language, by the Abyssinian priest Petros Gäbre-Egzer. The Fetha Nägäst" became the official supreme law of the land when Bishop Takla-Haymanot resurrected the "Solomonic Dynasty" about that time. Of course the Abyssinian church officially believes that the "Fetha Nägäst" is much older, and that it has never been altered.

671 779 The Code consists of 51 chapters, of which 22 deal with

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779 church rules and 29 with civil and criminal law, without any distinctions between these categories:

Table 7: The Old Abyssinian Law Code: Civil-Criminal and Ecclesiastical Content.

Ecclesiastical Content:	Civil-Criminal Content:
Duties of the Church	The Sick
Divine Literature	Food, Clothing, Dwelling, Occupations, suitable for the faithful.
Christening	
Patriarchs, Bishops, Priesthood	Marriage, Dowry; Prohibition of Concubinage
Deaconship and Under-Deaconship	
Commandments for all Believers	Loans free from interest; Mortgage; Bail
The Confession of Faith	Deposit; Power of Attorney
Circumcision and other Religious customs	Liberty; Slavery; Emancipation
Monks and Nuns	Guardianship
Martyrs; Confessors; Renegades	Society; Community of the faithful
Mass; Eucharist; Prayer; Fasting	
Endowments and Pious Foundations	Constraining a Person by Force
The Holy Days	Lost and Disappeared Property
Alms	Judge and Witnesses
The Tithe; First Fruits	Worshippers; Blasphemers; Sorcerers; Murderers
Administration and Income of the Church.	Thieves; Drunkards; Usurer
	The Disobedient Son
	Sexual Relations
	The Abused
	Tenancy and Land Serfdom
	The Will and Inheritance
	Public Roads; Plots; Buildings; Water.

693 694 If the quarrel is a civil matter, the curbstone judge usually acts merely as arbitrator ("aqoran"). He is rewarded by the loser, who has forfeited his "wager", usually with several "berellē" (glass bottles) of beer.

If, however, personal injury or some other criminal matter seems involved, or if no mutually satisfactory adjustment can be reached, the arbitrator may tie their togas together with a knot, and refer the matter to the cheqa shum.

693 622 The latter then sits as informal judge, to decide whether the matter should be referred to a regular formal judge, the "danya". Meanwhile he tries to arbitrate the case, with the power of his office as village headman lending him added prestige. In church-owned territory he may be a priest. Sometimes he is one of the local Confessors ("mänfäs agway"), particularly if it is a marital quarrel. Each of these offices lends the cheqa shum added prestige, for there is no formal separation of church and state organization at the base of the social pyramid. [779]

693 694 (2) The Indicting, Examining Judge. He is called "atbiya danya" (lit. handwashing judge), and his functions are broad, and vary between rural and town locale and between districts and regions. Sometimes the cheqa shum performs this function himself. In town, the atbiya danya may sit under a sycamore at the market, so that any tradesman or purchaser can complain to him about unfair weights or attempted theft. He can issue an immediate "fetem," an injunction to cease and desist.

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692 ment, who approves appointment to Sharia and Qadi positions.

5. Structure and Function of the Coptic Church among the Amhara.

795 The importance of the Coptic Church of Abyssinia on the life of every Amhara, of all classes, rural or urban, can hardly be exaggerated. To the Amhara, "Amhara" is synonymous with Abyssinian Christian; and the [198] liturgical language used in the church, "Geez", with "language of the free". The term used for their religion is "tăwahedo", often shortened to "towado", meaning "orthodox".

To the Amhara, his church is so closely connected with his attitudes to his country, his nation, his ethnocentrism, that the severance of ties with the mother Coptic Church of Alexandria, in 1948, passed almost [579] unnoticed. Only church scholars are aware that, as part of the larger Coptic church, the break with the Western church occurred after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D., ostensibly because the Copts insisted on complete fusion of the person of Christ, refusing to accept the "union, but not fusion of Deity and human spirit" of the non-Monophysite faith in the formula he pronounces when [788] slaughtering a sheep or ox: "In the name of the father, [224] the son, and the holy ghost, one divinity." The pious hunter will hasten to the wounded gazelle to pronounce the formula before the animal expires, then finish it off by cutting its throat

off by cutting its throat.

It may be that the use of the formula became emphatic centuries ago, as an equivalent-though-distinctive counterpart to the Muslim formula "Iin the name of Allah the all-merciful, and Muhammad hid his prophet". Another such distinction is almost certainly the blue neck-cord, "mätäb" which both male and female Abyssinian Copts wear to distinguish them from Muslims. But their other religious laws and taboos seem to date back to the Old Testament observances of Judaism, notable the taboo on the pig, which is not even raised outside (European Addis Ababa.

As a consequence of the religiosity of the people, the rules of the church have the force of law, unchallenged especially in the rural areas. Even the more modernized administration and new legislation has made little change in the close inter-relation of church and state functions, at the grassroots level. This interrelation is even closer in the form of social pressure. Foreign observers have remarked that without this church organization the social structure of the country would fall to pieces and lose its coherence.

Another significant factor is the large number of persons consecrated, or partly consecrated to the church service. Besides priests, monks and nuns there are boy deacons and church students, chorister-scribes, and other semi-laymen attached to the church, whose total number has been estimated at from 10% to 20% of the population, particularly the male population.

778 346 251 Geez). Here the bread and wine used in the eucharist are prepared and stored with great secrecy. The utensils of the nearby cooking hut, the baking pan "metad" and large clay jars for barley beer, are also stored here. Supplies of tyeff, barley, wheat, beans, peas, may also be stored.

779 186 In recent years, church parades feature prominantly the flag of the nation, the red-green-yellow of the central government, emphasizing in modern ways the close union of church and state that has long been traditional in Abyssinia.

(a) Worship and Devotional Poetry.

533 796 The musical chants and notations studies formally have already been outlined in connection with church education.

Church hymns, including devotional poetry, are called "qene" in a generic rather than specifically accurate sense. A collection of them is contained in the book "zubae qana", and they are sung in a special mode. The chief mode is called "selt". It has three variations:

(1) "geez" - short tones, dedicated to the "Father";

(2) "ezel" - mournful tones in minor key, dedicated to the "Son" 's passion;

(3) "araray" - long, drawn-out tones, dedicated to the "Holy Ghost".

These variations are interlaced, for special results, and for specific occasions. The mass, "qeddase" (lit. sanctification) is chanted in a mode bearing the

•779 B. The Functions of the Church in the Life of the Lay Public.

a) Sacerdotal Emphasis.

From the structure of the Abyssinian Church, the sacerdotal emphasis is evident, and even more so in the function and routines affecting the lay public. Church worship is regarded as a "temple" worship of the deity and saints, rather than as congregational worship. The latter idea seems entirely absent.

Discussions of religious philosophy, even of ethics, is limited to the higher grades of church schools, particularly monasteries. The view seems to regard such knowledge as confusing to the lay mind, even dangerous: the layman had far better listen and obey what filters down to him. There is no tradition of sermon or preaching. The ordinary parish priest usually knows barely enough liturgy for regular services, leaving occasional translations up to the dabtara. Nevertheless, the priest is supposed to influence the public indirectly, through living a holy life. Often he is the only local Christian who has married by "qurban" and is thus on good, eucharistic terms with the church, while the layman is technically excommunicated for having married by Zsemanya". More directly, he exerts influence as the arbiter of domestic quarrels, etc. He lends dignity to life through the rites of passage, particularly the series of memorial ("tăzkar") feasts.

779 The sacerdotal emphasis is so strong that efforts of the emperor to introduce preaching(of ethics, restraint in mourning, etc.) have been quietly ignored by the church, except for some polite and occasional attempts to please the emperor in Addis Ababa by fulfilling his wish in his own church.

b) The Annual Cycle of the Church Calendar, and its function.

805 The calend ar of Abyssinia is based on the Julian calendar of Rome, but the year begins September 11th, following the ancient Egyptian usage. The year has 12 months of 20 days each, plus 5 or 6 intercalar days at the end (the extra day once every 4 years). Historically this calendar probably came to Abyssinia from Alexandria, early in the ecclesiastical jurisdiction. However, Syrian usage was followed by the Abyssinian church in the practice of establishing feast and fast days in commemoration of martyrs under Diocletian and Syrian bishops of that period.

After Islam conquered Egypt, ecclesiastical computations continued to arrive, though often interrupted, through the Coptic Abuna sent from Alexandria, These computations arrived in the Arabic language, were translated into Geez, and collectively called "Abushaker" (Father of the Moon), after the book originally compiled by the author Demetros, who claimed to have received them by revelation from the Holy Ghost.

This calendar is about 7 to 8 years behind the

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776 795 course know what is going on, ignore the whole matter, just as they ignore the Zar worship.

795 768 Parallels to such religious syncretism are found not only in Egypt, but also in Syria, where Christian women go on short-range pilgrimage to the tomb of "weli" saints and smear mud from holy springs on their faces on a certain day of the Christian religious calendar.[79] This takes place in rural areas of Homs, but even near Damascus Muslims take part in celebrating the day of the Feast of the Cross in September.[80] Just as in visits to the tomb of water saints in Muslim Algeria,[81] the pilgrimage to Sheykh Abader is believed to bring on the light rains, which usually begin about that time, making early plowing and a good harvest possible. This is equally desired by both Muslims and Copts, just as individual good health is desired by both. Perhaps this unexpressed recognition explains the paradox of this religious syncretism.

f) The Church and the Present National State.

TA 659 Three phases can be distinguished in the recent relations of the Abyssinian church and the Amharic "Solomonic Dynasty" which the church returned to power in the 13th century but which now attempts to modernize

79. Gaulmier, J.: Pélérinages Populaires à Hama. Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales, 1931, Vol.1, pp.137-152.
80. Tresse, R.: Usages Saisonnières. Revue d'Etudes Orientales 1937, pp. 1-4; Lecerf & Tresse: Les Arada de Damas. BEO, 7-8, pp.236-264.
81. Probst-Biraben, J.H.: Pour La Pluie de Printemps en Algerie. En Terre d'Islam, 22, 1942, pp. 264-272.

779 659 the nation in Western patterns.

(1) The use of the church in promoting Amhara-
[721] dominated Ethiopian nationalism. This was recognized and promoted by Emperor Menelik II who had priests carry the "tabot" into newly conquered Galla, Sidamo and other pagan and semi-Muslim areas of his new empire, giving his
[566] military conquests the character of a crusade. Churches were built in these areas, guarded by troops of occupation, made permanent by feudal grants under which the local population, made "gabbar" serfs, was permitted to remain on the land as sharecroppers and peons of the feudal church.

This use of the church has been continued, though with reduced feudal emphasis, by the present emperor.
[212] The Geez alphabet of the church, modified in Amharic usage, is the only alphabet even non-Amharic-speakers may use, if they wish to write their languages, particularly in
[643] print. By taking on the name "Haile Selassye" (Power of the Trinity), upon coronation, the present emperor re-emphasized the power of the church. Finally, on November 4th 1955, when the new liberalized Constitution of 131 articles was proclaimed, it reaffirmed that the Ethiopian "Orthodox" Church, founded in the 4th century on the doctrines of St. Mark, is the established church of the state.

659 178 Phase (2), begun by the present emperor as his power increased, was a concurrent weakening of the temporal power of the church. At first this was gradual. In

186 828 Pride in group, military unit; less emphasis on individual heroism.

Steadier temperament; endurance rather than burst of energy.

"If you treat him as a friend, he will serve you faithfully."

186 779 The religious ethnocentrism of the Amhara is based on their belief that their nation, ruled by the "Solomonic Dynasty", became heir to the "Chosen People" ruled by the House of David, when the latter refused to accept Christ. This is not always clear to the illiterate Amhara, but even he emphasizes this intertwined ethnic and religious principle of his ethnocentrism when he regards the name "Amhara" as signifying both, as he always does.

[304] While the Amhara no longer regards circumcision ("gezrat") as the symbol of entering the Covenant of the Faith, as does the Old Testament and the Jewish religion, he does follow this procedure a week after birth; and an uncircumcised man ("lembut") is called several insulting names and regarded as almost on a level with African Shanqalla slaves who are also uncircumcised. Circumcision therefore has an intertwined ethnic and religious significance.

671 Amhara legal philosophy, guarded by the church, and expressed therefore in the Geez terminology, analyses the universe as follows:

Natural Law - "tabayawi heg"

Man-made Law - (similar to common law) - "sabawi heg"

Moral Law (particularly Coptic law) - "yabaherya heg" (lit. Law from overseas).

186 Ethnocentrism of the Amhara has for several centuries been consciously directed particularly against the attacking Muslims. The "matab" neckcord is believed directly the result of one such purposeful development. Numerous proverbs emphasize the stereotype of the Muslim as the breaker of Amhara religious order as well as social order, and the promoter of lawlessness. Even proverbs such as the following,

826 A very thin person ("jemmatam") is regarded as being full of tendons, nerves and veins, all of which are generically called "jemmat"; they are conceived as running through the body like the fibers of a tree.

The beard comes late, and since a good chin whisker is rare before the age of 30, it is regarded as a sign of maturity. The proverb says:

[539] "Beard, lacking to the teacher;
cypress, lacking to the church; (i.e. symbol of the churchyard) (are one)." (i.e. neither will be fully respected.)

● [779] The dichotomy of the human body, in the religion, considers the upper part holy; and the lower part, which serves sex and defecation, as profane. To illustrate one who serves two masters, the proverb says:

[539] "Above the hips - the tabot (sacred tablet of the church),
below the hips - idols."

No distinction is made in body hair, whether it is usually scanty underarm hair ("cheggum") or pubic hair, except that the latter was supposed to be plucked out by women. Despite the distinction of sacred and profane body parts, this distinction does not apply to archangels and saints, every part of whose body is lauded in some of the liturgy, e.g. in the book "Malek Mikael" which eulogizes also the body of this archangel.

Abnormalities of the human body are attributed to the effect of the supernatural. In the case of a new-born child, abnormality of body is attributed to an evil spirit, especially a male "zar" who has magically possessed the mother and who is jealous of the human husband whom he regards as his rival. In case of transvestites, who are always believed to be hermaphrodites ("fenafel"), the abnormality is actually referred to as a "mistake of God".

829 pattern continues in full force even at present. As a result, the high official is as hesitant about delegating authority downward (which might build up a potential rival), as the inferior in the hierarchy fears to accept delegated authority (lest the superior repent of his grant and suspect rebellion). In consequence, daily problems, even routine ones, are regularly referred for decision to the superior in the hierarchy of government.

812 The authoritarian "literalness" which characterises so many Amhara attitudes may at least in part be the effect of religious fundamentalism. Until recently, the "Fetha Negest" criminal and [681] civil code was literally enforced, including the cutting off of hands for theft and of feet for rebellion. Biblical passages are interpreted literally, by the priests. In monasteries, the monks exclude the presence of even female animals such as cows.

[679] The church, sacerdotal in its concepts and rituals, does not feel that it owes an explanation to anyone; and "literalness" has remained unchallenged (except during the relatively brief Portuguese episode). In the Amhara view, there is a direct and unilateral connection between cause and effect, and paradoxes that result from such oversimplifications are ignored: e.g. the tallest obelisk at Aksum, which has fallen and broken into several large pieces, is claimed to have been "pushed" over by the Falasha Queen Judith, despite the fact that another, almost as tall, still stands nearby. [682] Homicide, especially if accidental, is blamed on the "zar" spirits who pushed the murderer's hand.

647 Literal obedience dominates the governmental administration, for no subordinate would arrogate to himself the privilege of "interpret" the spirit of the law handed down by the official of superior status.

178 The present emperor, since his ascendancy in 1917 and particularly since his return from exile in 1941, has proceeded to build
645 643 a base for the modernization of his country through the creation of a modern-educated new elite. The only portfolio he holds personally in his own cabinet is that of Minister of Education (though the other ministers ask his guidance on even the most minute matters). It is this group which is beginning to bridge the gulf between the ethnic cleavages, and which is trying to enlarge Amhara loyalty to an Ethiopian nationalism. Its members give lip service to the still powerful Coptic church: they smoke publicly, but they will break the lenten fast only in secret, eat pork only when not in the public eye, and still refrain from walking arm-in-arm with a female in public. But when sent to the provinces to modernize the administration, they quietly make gradual but cumulative inroads against the temporal power of the church and against the feudal landowning gentry, on the basis of imperial proclamations and numerous directives. (Footnote 138)

643 178 779 This change is only in the initial stages. Some of the most fundamental decisions by the present emperor, notably the abolition of the "gabbar" (serf-like) system, and the measurement and registration of the land, have been most strongly resisted in the old-Amhara provinces, where these edicts have still not been enforced.

As a result, the emperor has often tried to proceed by indirect means. Just as he has utilized the foreign missionaries in his Amharization program, so has he tried to utilize the Abyssinian clergy in his modernization program. He has appointed an Egyptian Coptic clergyman-educator to head the new Theological College of

Footnote 138: For details see: Messing, Simon D.: Changing Ethiopia (in) The Middle East Journal, vol.9, no.4, Autumn 1955, pp. 413-432.

643 Addis Ababa. He has repeatedly urged the Abyssinian clergy to
178 take up the practice of preaching in church, on such subjects as
779 reduction of the violent mourning for the dead and the ruinous "taskar" memorial feasts; and admission of women into the church building. In Addis Ababa, a few modern-style churches have agreed to do this out of respect for his presence. But the provincial churches have retained their sacerdotal character and have not, except on occasions of brief imperial visits, adopted these innovations. The clergy has also resisted (by means of the "inertia" previously described) the urgings of the emperor to convert masses [77] of the "lower" ethnic groups to Coptic Abyssinian Christianity. Only sporadically have small-scale conversions taken place. The emperor seems to recognise the value of expanding the nominal State Religion, Coptic Abyssinian Christianity, to a real national church, as a piller of national solidarity and national loyalty.

178 The new élite, small in number, but actively supporting the
212 emperor's policies, and even occasionally beginning to become impatient with the circumspection and quiet, indirect, subtlety of Emperor Haile Selassie, has for some years raised the issue of the simplification of the Amhara alphabet. They had assumed that there would be much less opposition to such a worthwhile change than to big issues like abolition of the "gabbar" and changes in land tenure. The present alphabet, which consists of 259 syllables composed of 37 consonants and a minimum of 7 vowels, makes it difficult to teach writing to illiterate adults, children, and non-Amharic speakers, or to design typewriters. But the new, young, modern elite could not have been more mistaken in their optimism. The matter became a cause celebre, despite the fact that the proposal, published in 1948 in an Amharic booklet "Reform of the Alphabet",

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
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Abuna, Tecla Haimanout knew that very soon no set 793
of people would be more shamefully ignorant than those priests, even in the most common dogmas of their profession. He hoped, therefore, by a considerable stipend, to tempt some men of learning to accept of this place, to give his countenance to learning and religion among them.

The Arabic canon*, which is preserved by the 793
Abyssinian church, and said to be of the council of 175
Nice, should certainly be attributed to this Abuna, 779
and is a forgery in, or very soon after, his time; for, it is plain this canon took place about the year 1300, that it was lawful to elect an Abuna, who was a native of Abyssinia before this prohibition, otherwise it would not have been applied. Abuna Tecla Haimanout was an Abyssinian by birth, and he was Abuna; the prohibition, therefore, had not then taken place: but, as no Abyssinian was afterwards chosen, it must certainly be a work of his time; for it is impossible a canon should be made by the council of Nice, settling the rank of a bishop in a nation, which, for above 200 years after that general council, were not Christians.

As the Abuna very seldom understands the lan- 793
guage, he has no share of the government, but goes to the palace on days of ceremony, or when he has any favour to ask, or complaint to make. He is much fallen in esteem from what he was formerly, chiefly from his own little intrigues, his ignorance, avarice, and want of firmness. His greatest employment is in ordinations. A number of men and children present themselves at a distance, and there stand, from humility, not daring to approach him. He then asks who these are? and they tell him that they want to be deacons. On this, with a small iron cross in his hand,

* See Ludolf, lib. iii. cap. 2. No. 17.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
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than the Abuna. There are, after these, chief priests and scribes, as in the Jewish church: the last of these, the ignorant, careless copiers of the holy scriptures. 793

The monks here do not live in convents, as in Europe, but in separate houses round their church, and each cultivates a part of the property they have in land. The priests have their maintenance assigned to them in kind, and do not labour. A steward, being a layman, is placed among them by the king, who receives all the rents belonging to the churches, and gives to the priests the portion that is their due; but neither the Abuna, nor any other churchman, has any business with the revenues of churches, nor can touch them. 793 794

The articles of the faith of the Abyssinians have been inquired into and discussed with so much keenness in the beginning of this century, that I fear I should disoblige some of my readers were I to pass this subject without notice. 175 779

Their first bishop, Frumentius, being ordained about the year 333, and instructed in the religion of the Greeks of the church of Alexandria by St Athanasius, then sitting in the chair of St Mark, it follows, that the true religion of the Abyssinians, which they received on their conversion to Christianity, is that of the Greek church; and every rite, or ceremony, in the Abyssinian church may be found and traced up to its origin in the Greek church, while both of them were orthodox.

Frumentius preserved Abyssinia untainted with heresy till the day of his death. We find, from a letter preserved in the works of St Athanasius, that Constantius, the heretical Greek emperor, wished St Athanasius to deliver him up, which that patriarch refused to do: indeed, at that time, it was not in his power.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

175 779 Soon after this, Arianism, and a number of other heresies, each in their turn, were brought by the monks from Egypt, and infected the church of Abyssinia. A great part of these heresies, in the beginning, were certainly owing to the difference of the languages in those times, and especially the two words Nature and Person, than which no two words were ever more equivocal in every language into which they have been translated. Either of these words, in our own language, is a sufficient example of what I have said; and, in fact, we have adopted them from the Latin. If we had adopted the signification of these words in religion from the Greek, and applied the Latin words of Person and Nature to common and material cases, perhaps we had done better. Neither of them has ever yet been translated into the Abyssinian, so as to be understood to mean the same thing in different places. This for a time was, in a certain degree, remedied, or understood, by the free access they had, for several ages, both to Cairo and Jerusalem, where their books were revised and corrected, and many of the principal orthodox opinions inculcated. But, since the conquest of Arabia and Egypt by Sultan Selim, in 1516, the communication between Abyssinia and these two countries hath been very precarious and dangerous, if not entirely cut off; and now, as to doctrine, I am perfectly convinced they are in every respect to the full as great heretics as ever the Jesuits represented them. And I am confident, if any Catholic missionaries attempt to instruct them again, they will soon lose the use of letters, and the little knowledge they yet have of religion, from the prejudice only, and fear of incurring a danger they are not sufficiently acquainted with to follow the means of avoiding it.

779 The two natures in Christ, the two persons, their unity, their equality, the inferiority of the manhood,

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

doctrines, and definitions of the time of St Athanasius, 779 ●
are all wrapt up in tenfold darkness, and inextricable from amidst the thick clouds of heresy and ignorance of language. Nature is often mistaken for person, and person for nature; the same of the human substance. It is monstrous to hear their reasoning upon it. One would think, that every different monk, every time he talks, purposely broaches some new heresy. Scarce one of them that ever I conversed with, and those of the very best of them, would suffer it to be said, that Christ's body was perfectly like ours. Nay, it was easily seen, that, in their hearts, they went still further, and were very loth to believe, if they did believe at all, that the body of the Virgin Mary and St Anne were perfectly human.

Not to trouble the reader further with these uninteresting particulars and distinctions, I shall only add, that the Jesuits, in the account they give of the heresies, ignorance, and obstinacy of the Abyssinian clergy, have not misrepresented them, in the imputations made against them, either in point of faith or of morals. Whether, this being the case, the mission they undertook of themselves into that country, gave them authority to destroy the many with a view to convert the few, is a question to be resolved hereafter; I believe it did not; and that the tares and the wheat should have been suffered to grow together till a hand of more authority, guided by unerring judgement, pulled them, with that portion of safety he had pre-ordained for both.

The Protestant writers again unfairly triumph over their adversaries, the Catholics, by asking, Why all that noise about the two natures in Christ? It is plain, say they, from passages in the Haimanout Abou, and their other tracts upon orthodox belief, that they acknowledge that Christ was perfect God and perfect

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

● 779 man, of a rational soul and human flesh subsisting, and that all the confessions of unity, co-equality, and inferiority, are there expressed in the clearest manner as received in the Greek church. What necessity was there for more; and what need of disputing upon these points, already so fully settled?

This, I beg leave to say, is unfair; for, though it is true, that, at the time of collecting the Haimanout Abou, and at the time when St Athanasius, St Cyril, and St Chrysostom wrote, the explanation of these points was uniform in favour of orthodoxy, and that while access could easily be had to Jerusalem, or Alexandria, then Greek and Christian cities, difficulties, if any arose, were easily resolved; yet, at the time the Jesuits came, those books were very rare in the country, and the contents of them so far from being understood, that they were applied to the support of the grossest heresies, from the misinterpretation of the ignorant monks of these latter times. That the Abyssinians had been orthodox availed nothing: they were then become as ignorant of the doctrines of St Athanasius and St Cyril, as if those fathers had never wrote; and it is their religion at this period which the Jesuits condemn, not that of the church of Alexandria, when in its purity under the first patriarchs; and, to complete all their misfortunes, no access to Jerusalem is any longer open to them, and very rarely communication with Cairo.

On the other hand, the Jesuits, who found that the Abyssinians were often wrong in some things, were resolved to deny that they could be right in any thing; and, from attacking their tenets, they fell upon their ceremonies received in the Greek church at the same time with Christianity; and, in this dispute they shewed great ignorance and malevolence, which they supported by the help of falsehood and invention.—

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

I shall take notice of only one instance in many, because it has been insisted upon by both parties with unusual vehemence, and very little candour. 779

It was settled by the first general council, that one baptism only was necessary for the regeneration of man, for freeing him from the sin of our first parents, and listing him under the banner of Christ; "I confess one baptism for the remissions of sins," says the Symbol. Now, it was maintained by the Jesuits, that in Abyssinia, once every year, they baptized all grown people, or adults. I shall, as briefly as possible, set down what I myself saw while on the spot. 783 796

The small river, running between the town of Adowa and the church, had been dammed up for several days; the stream was scanty, so that it scarcely overflowed. It was in some places three feet deep, in some, perhaps, four, or little more. Three large tents were pitched the morning before the feast of the Epiphany; one, on the north, for the priests to repose in during intervals of the service, and, besides this, one to communicate in: on the south there was a third tent for the monks and priests of another church to rest themselves in their turn. About twelve clock at night the monks and priests met together, and began their prayers and psalms at the water-side, one party relieving each other. At dawn of day the governor, Welleta Michael, came hither with some soldiers to raise men for Ras Michael, then on his march against Waragna Fasil, and sat down on a small hill by the water-side, the troops all skirmishing on foot and on horseback around them.

As soon as the sun began to appear, three large crosses of wood were carried by three priests dressed in their sacerdotal vestments, and who, coming to the side of the river, dipt the cross into the water, and all this time the firing, skirmishing, and praying went on to-

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

175 worse should befall them, and the process was rapid and
771 simple—immersion in the nearest stream, circumcision, and generally the tying of a piece of blue silk cord round the neck.

• 779 The form of Christianity professed by Abyssinia is the monophysite, which was condemned as a "heresy" by the Council of Chalcedon in 450. This doctrine recognizes only one nature in Christ, against the view which has maintained itself as orthodox that the divine and human natures co-existed in him. But in spite of the thunders of Chalcedon the Abyssinians have held to their doctrine, although controversies as to a single, dual, and even threefold nature have raged in the country right up to the time of Theodore, who possessed decided views on the subject, and exercised drastic methods in giving effect to them.

793 The Church is to all intents and purposes an independent one, its only link with the Coptic Church in Egypt, on which it is nominally dependent, being the appointment by Alexandria of the Archbishop, or Abouna: he is an Egyptian, and once appointed he is supposed never to leave the country.

Tradition relates that the appointment of a foreign Abouna was laid down as a cardinal principle by the great Abyssinian ecclesiastic and national saint, Tekla Haimanot, in the thirteenth century in order to maintain connection between Abyssinia and the outside world, and to avoid internal rivalry in the nomination to the headship of the Church. Be that as it may, the Abyssinians attach considerable importance to their connection with the Alexandrian Church through their Abouna; this may be gauged from the fact that the Treaty between England, Egypt, and Abyssinia, made

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5
Ethiopia MP1
Tigre MN9

I

INTRODUCTION

AMHARA TRADITION AND ETHIOPIA'S MODERNIZATION

THE FACT OF AMHARA DOMINANCE

Of the many traditions which are alive in the empire of Ethiopia—those of the nomadic Danakil and the sedentary Wollamo, the hippopotamus-eating Woyto and the ensete-eating Gurage, the age-graded Konso and the patrilineal Somali, the Judaic Falasha and the Muslim Bani 'Amer, and many others—clearly the dominant tradition is that of the people known throughout history to the outside world as the Abyssinians. Living on the temperate highland massif in the northern and central regions of the country, these people have gained their subsistence through the plow cultivation of cereal grains, have organized their polity as a feudal kingdom, and have remained steadfast in their Monophysite Christian faith since its introduction to the land in the fourth century.

The Abyssinians comprise two linguistic and geographical groups—the Amhara and the Tigre.* The Tigre inhabit the northern part of Ethiopia, above the Takazzē River; their lands fall in what are now the province of Tigre and the former Italian colony of Eritrea. Their language, Tigrinya, is

* Abyssinians object to the term "Abyssinian," since it has been used pejoratively by foreigners, even though they do use its indigenous counterpart, "*Hābashā*," among themselves. The term apparently derives from the name of one of the South Arabian tribes which migrated to Ethiopia in antiquity—the Habashat. In deference to this objection, I shall use the compound "Amhara-Tigre" in place of "Abyssinian" wherever feasible. The name "Ethiopia" will be used consistently to refer to the national polity which, throughout its history, has included other peoples and traditions as well as the Amhara-Tigre.

1. [The Abyssinians, composed of Amhara and Tigre--Analyst]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

sponsored the translation of works from Arabic. Among these were *Laws of the Kings*, a collection of civil and canon laws which became the official basis for judication, and a penitential manual, *Spiritual Medicine*, the last major production in Ge'ez literature.

Yohännes also continued Fäsil's work of "purifying" the church. He decreed that descendants of the Portuguese must leave Ethiopia unless they joined the Orthodox Church and that Muslims must reside apart, either in their own villages or in ghettos. Ordained as a priest before becoming emperor, Yohännes followed keenly the theological disputes of his day. Toward the end of his reign he convoked a synod in Gondar to discuss the nature of the Holy Spirit in Christ, the chief theological question in Ethiopian history.

Iyäsu I, like many of Ethiopia's rulers, appears to have been moved by deep religious feeling. Describing Iyäsu's religiosity, one of the priests of Gondar wrote an eulogy a few years after his death:

> The king used to stand at the window of his palace . . . and listen from his tower on high to the singing of the priests and learned men, to their gentle hymns which moistened the bones by their exceeding tenderness. When their offerings pleased him greatly he was pierced with affection for them and drawn by the harmony of their heavenly peace. For this reason . . . he would prepare for them dinners filled with delights, and bid them eat with him in his royal chambers, ornamented all about with the beauty of pure gold and wrought silver. He would take off his gold necklace and present it to them. He adorned them with garments of purple and of staffs interwoven with gold from the treasury of his kingdom. . . . None of the kings before him had done such as he, and none of the clergy of yore had been treated as were his priests and learned men. After the dinners, the king and his priests together sang hymns of joy and jubilation all night long in the palace—in their time of pleasure, in the sweetness of divine ministry.*

Iyäsu the Great did much to establish Gondar as the most important center of religious culture in Ethiopia. To this end he brought outstanding priests and learned men from all over the country to his capital. From Gojjam, for example, he brought the great master of religious verse, Kïflé Yohännes, whose lines are remembered even today. The number of teachers in Gondar in his time exceeded five hundred; there were one hundred and fifty at his church Dabra Berhän Selassie alone.* It was under Iyäsu I that the classic subject matter of the higher religious studies in Abyssinia—*zëmä* ("religious

* Dabra Berhän Selassie, one of the two churches built by Iyäsu I, is the only one of the original churches of Gondar which survived later conflagrations of the city. The original paintings which covered its walls have been preserved, as well as the remarkable ceiling from which rows of wide-eyed angels look down from between wooden beams. The church provides separate places for nobility and commoners, and a balcony for the emperor.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

drastic changes on the familiar natural order. Insofar as there is a special affect regarding nature, it takes the form of a sentimentalization of the useful—as in the great respect felt for young cattle, the thrill aroused by the sight of newly sprouted grain, and the deep nostalgia about one's land.

The Supernatural

The peasant's conception of God is closer to that of the learned clergy than is his cosmology, since the Abyssinian clergy have tended to avoid systematic theology, believing that to probe too deeply into the nature of God verges on blasphemy. Abyssinians view God above all as *mystery*.

Nevertheless, they do have a sense of the various attributes of their God. God is the creator of the world. He is, as the name *Egziäbhër* signifies, Lord of the earth; and He is Lord of the seas, Lord of the King of Kings, and Lord of the angels. He is eternal and possesses knowledge without limit.

The Amhara peasant has a keen awareness that wherever one goes, God is there. "If you say no one is looking," goes an Amharic saying, "still God will see you." This consciousness of God's presence is reflected in the habit of referring to God scores of times every day. A number of common expressions contain references to God:

For greeting and farewell	"May He give you health for me."
For showing gratitude	"May God give you for me."
For responding to queries about one's health	"God be praised!"
For thanksgiving after meals	"Be praised, my Lord!"
For swearing by a statement that has been challenged	"By God! By the Savior!"

Prayers to God are spoken on numerous occasions. God's blessing is sought when an animal is slaughtered, when a group of people sits to eat, when a new house is begun, and when it is completed. Each day begins with a prayer something like this: "May He cause me to spend the day in peace. May He keep trouble from me. May He pardon my sins." When the peasant begins planting, he also prays: "God bless the seed; feed me, keeping birds away from it; bless it for the mouth of man."

It is probably the attribute of God's omnipotence, however, that appears most vivid to the Amhara mind. Everything that happens reflects His active will. The thunder expresses His anger, a flood the visitation of His wrath upon the sinful. He is ever active, bringing births and deaths, prosperity and hunger, leading one traveler to safety and another to disaster. He controls the homeliest details of everyday life. One boy, troubled that he was not selling his goods in the market, confessed that God must be angry with him about something. Another, asked what he wanted to do the following year, replied:

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Loyalty is proclaimed all around. Conviviality is the norm among peers, though the authoritarian character of the Amhara family inhibits camaraderie between those of greatly differing ages. Unlimited succor in time of sickness and death and profuse commensality in happier hours are important values to the Amhara peasant and ones about which he is self-conscious and articulate.

Reverence for one's fathers is perhaps the key legitimating principle in the structure of Amhara morality. This is the outgrowth and foundation of a social system which makes children devoted servants of their fathers and keeps men under their fathers' control until they are fully adult. The fierce loyalty to the symbols and practices of the church is experienced as being true to "the faith of our fathers," and it is an analogous devotion to "the land of our fathers" that moves the Amhara to a steadfast defense of his hereditary farmland and the borders of his country.

The chief areas of conflict within the Amhara peasant's conception of the good life are those of sex and aggression. These conflicts appear to reflect the mixture of Christian and pagan cultures in Abyssinian history. From Christianity come beliefs that marriage is sacred, divorce is not legitimate, and adultery is taboo. The Amhara peasant, while respecting the embodiment of these norms in the lives of priests, feels justified in having sexual relations outside marriage and in getting a divorce whenever the need arises. Perhaps it can be argued that this represents a conflict between norms and practice, but the legitimate tone of the non-Christian behavior suggests that it might well be considered an alternative norm, a carry-over from the ancient culture which legitimized polygamy.

Attitudes concerning the use of violence represent a clear instance of conflict of norms. The precepts "Do not kill" and "Love thy neighbor," though not regarded as constituting the crux of Christian ethics, are known and acknowledged in Abyssinia. The rare priest or elder who embodies the classic ideal of Christian love is appreciated as a man of the highest virtue. The fearless killer, on the other hand, embodies another ideal of no less importance—that of being *guabaz*, brave and manly. The peasant who assaults his neighbor because the latter has usurped his land, committed adultery with his wife, injured his *zamad*, or insulted him grievously is following an ethic of cardinal importance in Amhara culture.[14]

The Central Confrontation

The foregoing has indicated some of the main concepts through which the Amhara peasant perceives the common objects of human experience, and what meaning they have for him. Since it is an exploratory account, it lacks the unity that would come from the consistent application of a rigorous observational procedure or of a coherent, analytic conceptual scheme. Yet even at the present stage of inquiry it is possible to move toward a more unified state-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

the Amhara. Both partners enter the marriage with the full understanding that if they do not get along they will be able to separate without much difficulty, each partner taking half the goods that were accumulated during the marriage as well as the land and other private property each brought into the marriage. Only after several years of married life, which have resulted in children, and probably a separation followed by rapprochement or else divorce and remarriage, is the Amhara defined by his culture as a complete adult, a *mulu sĕt* or *mulu saw*.

From Generation to Generation

Through the agency of his family of orientation, then, the Amhara adolescent automatically is prepared for adult work responsibilities and launched into married life. Continuity of the social system, however, also depends on the maintenance of a moral order that transcends the narrow commitments of kinship units. What of those sentiments that should dispose the young Amhara to conform with the more general norms of adult society?

The Abyssinian moral order rests primarily upon two pillars: the profession of Christianity and the institution of respect. These dispositions are firmly implanted during childhood and receive steady reinforcement during the transition to adulthood.

Maintenance of the fasting and dietary laws appears to be the central symbol of Christian identity in Amhara culture. Here again one may discern a pattern of progressively increased inculcation of norms throughout maturation. The taboos against pork and other unclean foods are taught at an early age and supported by references to unclean heathens ever after. More important, the Amhara learns step by step how to chasten his stomach in the traditional way. As soon as he is old enough to observe what goes on in his home, he is aware that meat products are not served to anyone on fasting days. Around the age of seven he begins his first regular fast, which means avoiding all food before noon, by observing the sixteen-day fast of *Felsatä*. The Wednesday and Friday fasts are supposed to be observed following this, though in practice it may be a few more years before the child keeps these weekly fasts regularly. Observance of the most trying fast of all, the eight-week fast of Lent, begins at about the age of fifteen.

At the same time, the adolescent comes increasingly under the jurisdiction of a member of the ordained clergy known as his *nafs abbät* ("soul-father" or confessor). This is particularly so after marriage, when the young man may either continue to be attached to the soul-father of his own father or else may choose another one for himself. (The wife always takes the soul-father of her husband.) The soul-father serves as an agent of moral control by prescribing penance for his confessants when he learns of such infractions of the Christian rules as breaking the fasts.

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tian rules as breaking the fasts. By adjusting to the adult fasting schedule and submitting to the moral authority of the soul-father the young person's membership in the Amhara religious community is being solidly established. With the advent of full adulthood, around the age of thirty, the Amhara is ready to observe the most severe fast of all, the forty-eight-hour period of total abstinence before Easter.

Forms of obedience and respect comprise the principal fiber of the Amhara social fabric, as we shall see more clearly in chapter vii. They are perhaps the most fundamental lessons of Amhara socialization. As soon as the child is capable of understanding he is made aware that all individuals older than he is, and all those in higher social positions, must be shown the most fastidious deference. Not to do so is a sign of being *bälagē* ("rude"), a trait which is corrected by harsh physical punishment. The readiness to respect superiors appears as early as in children's play groups, where the oldest boy spontaneously dictates the activities of the group and receives unquestioning obedience from the others.

For girls after ten and boys after twelve the training for obedience and respect is stepped up as they come under a more constant regimen of control by their parents and other elders. They are ordered to do a considerable amount of work for the household and are expected to be at the beck and call of any individual of higher status who tells them to do something. Thus they become conditioned to show automatic subservience to any figure of authority in later life, be it the family patriarch, community elder, priest, or political official.

His family of orientation is thus the primary agent for transmitting to the Amhara adolescent the more general societal norms as well as for readying him for his adult roles. In order to secure continuity of the Abyssinian social system from generation to generation, specific mechanisms outside the family, such as puberty rites or adolescent age groups, have not been required to mediate the transition to adulthood.

Personal Identity and Variant Patterns[8]

The most important single determinant of the personality of an Amhara appears to be his identification with the parent or parent-figure of the same sex. "Like father, like son" is both ideology and reality in Abyssinia. The attainment of ego identity is therefore normally a matter of imitation rather than discovery or invention. It represents an unfolding of dispositions that have been long internalized and steadily nursed by the consistent regards of an approving milieu.

Assuming the appropriate psychosexual identity is, it appears, hardly ever problematic. Although members of the same sex typically kiss upon greeting,

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

of ascetic piety is stressed at the expense of knowledge. The monk need not even know how to read, though if a lifelong monk he is likely to have devoted much time to traditional studies. The *dabtarā*, by contrast, lives by his lore and his learning. At his best, the Abyssinian monk conveys a real sense of spiritual purity, of profound mystical bearing, of an utterly mild manner. The *dabtarā*, at his best, is a subtle conversationalist and an operator of wondrous effects.*

Thus, while the status of members of the old nobility was a compound resultant of simultaneously operating criteria—family and region, royal favor and accumulated power—the several criteria relevant to the status of the clergy operated more or less independently. This made the religious elite a more differentiated stratum.

This statement need be qualified only by the fact that, in addition to the considerations of ritual purity, ascetic piety, and traditional learning, a fourth factor influenced the status of the clergy, namely, royal favor as expressed in appointments to the high ecclesiastical offices. This factor crosscut the others, for such favor was dispensed to members of all three status groups. The *eçhagē* was always a monk; the *aqābē sa'āt* would seem to have been a *dabtarā;* the post of *alaqā* could be given to members of all three groups.

Just how these types of local clergy were related to the clergy at the national level in the traditional order is a question that is difficult to answer. In any case, it is likely that there were conflicts among their representatives in the competition for royal favor. In the fourteenth century, the ecclesiastics of the royal entourage included only secular clergy, and their deportment was sharply criticized by Eçhagē Fileppos, who charged that "those who live in the dwelling of the Sovereign, go about proudly in subtle raiment and with ornaments of gold and silver—perishables—and are very arrogant."[49] However, once Zar'a Yā'qob had established the custom of bringing members of the convent of Dabra Libānos to the court, the monastic order was always well represented in the royal entourage as well. In the present period one sometimes hears of competition among the different groups for influence in

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* The association of impious properties with the main representative of traditional religious learning may be seen as an expression of the Abyssinian's ambivalence toward knowledge as such. The whole tenor of Ethiopian Orthodox religion runs counter to ratiocination and inquiry. It stresses mystery and discourages curiosity with tales like that of the man who tried to probe the mystery of the Trinity and was swallowed up by the earth—a tale commonly told to students who are learning to read. For this reason Orthodox students have frequently been quite upset by the rational theodicy taught by the Jesuit fathers at the University College.

As observed in the previous chapter, moreover, it was traditionally believed that too much learning results in madness, a belief no doubt based on the fact that older church students often drink a certain medicine to quicken their mental faculties, which sometimes deranges them (as the author has witnessed). The *dabtarā*, for their part, would seem to have thrived on this belief, benefiting from the exclusive powers and privileges gained from their esoteric knowledge.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

the contemporary church hierarchy, the *dabtarā* stressing their special intellectual qualification for high positions, the monks their greater piety.

The Traditional Balance

Whatever the internal fragmentation of the church—which was compounded by regionally based doctrinal controversies—it may for the moment be considered as a unified estate vis-à-vis the secular powers. This permits us to raise the question of the integration of politico-military and religious elites in traditional Abyssinian society, a question that may be discussed in terms of two relationships: that between the values represented by the two elites, and that between the interests of their respective institutions.

The social teachings of the Ethiopian Church were couched in terms of practical justice, not universal love. Thus the pacifistic strain in Christianity barely made itself felt. The priests, to be sure, were forbidden to shed blood, animal or human; but this is more in the nature of a necessity for the maintenance of ritual purity than a symbol of moral principle. They went along willingly to the battlefield in ceremonial capacity. In fact, comments d'Abbadie, most of them would reject the interdiction of their taking part in military expeditions as a denial of their rights.[50]

Far from opposing warfare, Ethiopian Christianity served rather as an inspiration and justification for wars; since much of the fighting was directed against Muslim, Judaic, or pagan peoples, the warfare took on something of a crusading tone. As for internecine war, it was commonly justified in terms of *lex talionis*, a religiously sanctioned punishment for the sins of the enemy. In this respect, then, the two elites gave impressive support to each other. The warlords were serving the church by fighting the heathen. The fate of their military expeditions, on the other hand, was assisted by the prayers of the accompanying clergy. This reciprocal dependence was symbolized by the custom of taking some *tābot* along with the army to the battlefield, and by the custom of "greeting" the church as the first thing a warrior does when he returns home.

The values of warfare and religion were further harmonized by the symbolism of the emperor, Lion of Judah. The emperor combined in his person the figures of indomitable warlord and devout—and divinely guided—Christian. This combination was an integral part of the self-image projected by many emperors, as reflected, for example, in the identification with Constantine the Great manifested by Zar'a Yā'qob and Eskender (1478–94) in their choice of throne name, and by Tēwodros II in his coronation speech.

With regard to civil policy, moreover, the nobility and clergy were in basic accord. Both groups felt a special responsibility for adjudicating disputes. Both felt that their superior status entitled them to receive substantial amounts of rent and revenues from lands granted them by the king, and to

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

phenomena, traits inherited from earlier traditions and retained through inertia, and that no psychological processes need be invoked in describing them. But this argument fails to explain why, in view of the harmful physical and political consequences of their excessive fasting, the Amhara should have developed in the direction of increasing rather than alleviating their fasting burden. For Abyssinia's commitment to fasting was well known by her enemies, and used to her disadvantage: Ahmad Grāñ took advantage of the country's weakness during Lent to launch his attacks at that time year after year, and the Galla hordes who succeeded him did likewise. The argument also fails to explain why the taboos on pork and tobacco, and the fasting prescriptions, should have been pushed to the forefront of Amhara Christian consciousness. For observance of these mores is considered the very crux of Christianity by traditional Amhara. Amhara often refer to fasting as the most important part of their religion. If a person fails to fast, his relatives are technically absolved from the duty of providing memorial feasts for him when he dies; let his soul wander in darkness! Fasting more than anything else protects them from the devil and enhances the likelihood of their entering paradise.

Apart from their adherence to these cultural norms, moreover, the Amhara also manifest anxiety regarding oral gratification at the purely psychological level. There is, on the one hand, a constant undertone of concern among Amhara about getting enough to eat, even under favorable agricultural conditions. On the other hand, there is a good deal of concern about the consequences of eating too much. There is much worry among the Amhara about the dangers of excessive eating at the conclusion of periods of fasting. There is also the fear that if one indulges in eating and drinking he may become uncontrollably hostile, a fear expressed in the previously mentioned notion of *ţegābaññā*. These and other forms of anxiety about oral gratification are expressed in a number of folk tales, in which eating, drinking, singing, talking, or simply opening one's mouth result in such misfortunes as sickness, loss of property, and death.[20] A similar theme appears in the epic *Glory of Kings:* the Queen of Sheba, in satisfying her thirst by drinking from a goblet which King Solomon had placed in her bedroom, thereby forfeited her right to immunity from his amorous desires and was obliged to yield to his embrace.

Ambivalence regarding oral aggressiveness, finally, may be discerned in the Amhara's anxiety about being eaten, an anxiety which should probably be interpreted as an externalization of unacceptable oral-sadistic impulses. Traditional Amhara have a morbid fear of being "eaten" by those with the evil eye, *budā* and *ţayb*, men who are believed to destroy their victim by invisibly sucking his blood. It is largely because of this fear that children are kept away from strangers. Similar projections appear in connection with other well-known figures in Amhara culture. Another fearful object is the *çhirāq*, a giant

pitiated with zar-favored foodstuffs. Because of this, they are loosely associated with the zars. Unlike the latter, however, they are vague phantoms with whom no communication is possible; their demands are known from convention and, once satiated, leave the sickman permanently.

Zars contrast with ganels in several significant respects. The zar lives in a world which parallels but is distinct from man's own; it is a world whose existence, together with that of the zars themselves, is denied by the Coptic Church. The ganel's existence is entirely earth-bound, and he is identified by the Church as the Abyssinian satan (seytan). Whereas it is the zar which initiates ties with his human host, the ganel is forced into such relationships by his human partner. The zar's host may be anyone, the ganel's partner is always a male ecclesiastic who possesses a store of esoteric knowledge.

The ganel's appearance is known from scriptural references and, in addition, they are infrequently seen. When visible, the ganel appears as a tall and thin blackman, Nilotic except for certain details. Descriptions by laymen are generally hearsay, since madness (ibidet) strikes the unprotected human who looks on a ganel; if the glance is returned, the effects are mortal. So dangerous is the ganel's person that even contact with his shadow leaves the victim stammering and given over to

*753 grazing. Both highland zones are considered ideal for
131 human habitation. While residents of the dega zone oc-
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821 casionally comment on what they regard as the uncomfor-
table summer heat of the weyna dega, at the same time
it is acknowledged that the rainy season (kiramt) is more
burdensome in the dega. The rains last from May to
September and are marked by temperatures in the mid-
thirties in dega lands and perhaps ten to fifteen degrees
warmer in the weyna dega. This season is regarded as a
particularly bad time for kurtimat (rheumatoid complaints),
whose severity is considered greatest in the dega zone.
Epidemiologically, the dega is also associated with a
relatively high incidence of yinifas basiyta ("the wind
disease"), an ailment described in Chapter One.

131 Although reliable population estimates are lacking,
101 the weyna dega and dega zones contain perhaps 85% of
161 Begemder's people. These rural highlands are occupied
197 by five ethnic groups, racially indistinguishable from
144 one another and, with an exception, now speaking a com-
mon Semetic language, Amharic. The Amhara are the most
nmmerous of Begemder's highland peoples, and extend into
the provinces of Gojam and Shoa, to the south. Within
the Begemder highlands, they occupy the area south of
latitude $13^{0}30'$. North of this line live the Tigre, a
related people who speak a cognate language, Tigrinya.
101 Both Amhara and Tigre are Coptic Christians, and from
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12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

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779 their combined ranks the political elite of Ethiopia has been historically recruited. Third among the highland peoples are the Agaw. It appears likely that they are the descendants of the original Hamitic population of this region, and only during the last century have most Begemder Agaw been converted from their indigenous religious beliefs to membership in the Coptic Church. Within Begemder, they constitute a majority of the inhabitants of three non-contiguous areas. Fourth among highlanders are the rural Muslims, indigenous people who have been converted to Islam over the last five centuries.

[241] While the rural Amhara, Tigre, and Agaw are exclusively
[463] farmers, these Muslims divide their energies between farm-
[286] ing and working as artisans, mainly weavers of the toga
[443] cloth; Muslim women are prominant among the traders of
[562] the weekly markets held throughout the province. Least numerous of the highland people are the Falasha, Abyssin-
[423] ian Jews following a Mosaic creed. A despised and humil-
[326] iated people, the Falasha farm only rented fields
[286] (*timene*), and work as smiths as well as weavers; Falasha
[162] women are potters. Although the Falasha are localized in several regions, they nowhere constitute a majority
[361] of an area's residents. Like the Abyssinian Muslims, they reside either in hamlets of their own, apart from Amhara, or in peripheral homesteads of otherwise Christian hamlets. These distributions are summarized in Map2.

	Tikurmidir	Lemmariet
Ambilineage III	4	
Ambilineage IV	3	
Ambilineage V		3
Ambilineage VI		3
Ambilineage VII		2
Total risteñas households	31	21

In each of the hamlets, there are two households belonging to Amhara tenant farmers (timeneña), individuals unable to claim membership in any local ambilineage. These tenants, who provide their own seed and draught animals, return a quarter of their crops to the risteñas whose fields they use. There in Tikurmidir two additional timeneña households, whose members are Muslims. These households are headed by brothers who supplement their agricultural activities by weaving the lama (toga) for local Christians.

Primary rights to a third of a parish's fields are believed to reside with the parish church. Ideally, the use of such fields, known as yikeys mariet ("priest's land"), is given to local priests in return for participating in the Masses of the parish church. In practice, rist-holding ambilineages become associated with specific tracts of yikeys mariet by providing such priests over generations. Occasionally, ambilineage

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
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632 of the town's total population, support themselves by
433 working among the densely packed rows of beer houses
463 and mead halls which are found along the approaches to, and in the vicinity of, the arada, the weekly market area. A portion of these women alternate periods of beer selling with work as servants in Amhara households.

632 Gondar's Muslims include both Abyssinians (pejora-
• 779 tively, "Jabartiy", "half-caste") and Arabs. While the
563 former are mono-lingual Amharic speakers and physically
[197] indistinguishable from Amhara, the latter are distinc-
[162] tively dressed, bilingual in Amharic and Arabic, often
[142] light-skinned, and either immigrants from South Arabia or the descendants of immigrants and their Abyssinian
[443] wives. Arab men are the town's most affluent merchants
[442] (who often make a weekly circuit of provincial markets with their goods), shop-keepers, and wholesalers. Arab women are secluded at home. In the main, Gondar's Muslims are residentially nucleated in Addis Allem, a settlement on the town's southern perimeter and contiguous to the arada.

632 A substantial number of Tigrinya-speaking people,
563 predominantly Eritrean, live in Gondar. The men are
463 employed mainly as artisans (carpenters, masons, sandal
[197] makers, tailors, tinkers), laborers, and ecclesiastics.
[542] Because of their relative sophistication, Eritrean women are popular servants for affluent townsmen, and as

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bar maids.

[463]
[562] A third, numerically significant minority have come from the provinces of Wollo to the east, and from Shoa and those areas still farther south. Local Amhara classify them together pejoratively as "Galla"[18], even [144] though many are in fact true Amhara. Although these "Galla" vary as to physical type, most are indistinguishable from local Amhara, and only a minority are markedly • [779] negroid. Most are Copts or Muslims, although a few are [647] non-Coptic Christians. Most of the men are government employees, generally members of the provincial gendarmerie, which is headquartered in Gondar.

Three additional, numerically small, populations [562] also reside in Gondar. The Agaw are represented mainly [464] by girls and women working as servants for the less affluent townsfolk, and as beer sellers. Of the Nilotes * [192] living here, the women work as servants for poor townsfolk, and both sexes haul wood from distant areas for [326] sale in the town's daily wood market (sir gabiya). The very few Falasha in Gondar are iron-mongers.

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621 Ward and Town. Gondar's residents divide the town

[18] The predominant ethnic group of southern Ethiopia, and, to Gondari Amhara, half-pagan and negroid ("bariya").

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

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621 relevant by townsfolk, and tracts, alone or in combination, came to be redesignated as "ward". Typically, the non-corporate wards encompass no agricultural lands, and includes no church within its boundaries. None of its resident families are ristenas or even related to one another, and each tends to associate itself with a church [779] according to cirteria other than residence. Indeed, in some, Muslims occupy homesteads within an otherwise Christian ward.

Most of Gondar's wards are today without any corporate identity, and serve simply as convenient place names or as occasional indicators of affluence and occupation. Although the meaning of many ward names is forgotten now, the names of others remain appropriately descriptive. Some denote the residents' occupation; [192] (the "place of the superior beer", "encoye mosk", which is occupied by beer houses). Others retain the name of an eponymic church (as in Rufael sebeka).

Non-corporate wards are not a recent innovation. From its founding in the seventeenth century, Gondar has included such sebekas---given over to beer houses and mead halls, to liegemen and warriors, and to a variety of artisans. The last war and its aftermath have only extended such areas and have encouraged ristenas to build residences on their lands for out-landers unable to find housing elsewhere in town.

*278 *755 unable to move the buda beyond incoherent ramblings, or may be content to stimulate the buda to no response at all; or a wily buda may, in spite of an otherwise adequate therapy, retain his hold on the sickman. Any one reason is sufficient to explain either a failure to obtain even a temporary remission of symptoms or, what amounts to the same thing etiologically, a recurrence of symptoms. Success now may require a more powerful therapy, substituting a fumitory for the inhalant.

*[192] The sickman is restrained as before. A fumitory pot containing smoking herbals is placed before him, and a heavy toga (maviy) is thrown over both the sickman's head and the fumitory pot, in a tent-like fashion. The fumitory pot is replaced periodically so that the buda is given no respite. Even during interrogation he is not allowed to rise from the toga. Profuse perspiration is not uncommon, and is considered an indication that the disease substance is being driven out of the sickman's body. The format of interrogation is altered in that the buda's desires are no longer solicited; rather, his immediate departure is demanded upon threat of continued exposure to the fumitory. The buda's departure is followed by a strong purge, as before.

*755 • 779 If, in spite of all, therapy fails, the victim's close kinsmen may seek out the responsible Falasha-buda. The buda's identity is known from the therapeutic inter-

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*979 rogation, or is perhaps provided by a professional diviner, or is reached through speculation and coincidence. Here, family and friends of the sickman threaten the unfortunate Falasha with his life should the sickman die; if the sickman is already dead, the suspect may be waylaid outright. Frequently, however, the identity of the buda is unknown; evidence may be circumstantial and inconclusive, or may point to a transient Falasha (from a distant and unidentified hamlet).

*755 Finally, therapeutic failure may have resulted from an inaccurate diagnosis, either cunningly manipulated by a zar or zanel, or the result of premature conclusions drawn from ambiguous symptomatic information.